# Eraser: Dynamic Data Race Detection

15-712

# Project stuff

- Wanted to push a few groups specifically towards DISC-style projects
  - We've got resources
  - And lots of interested faculty
  - And it's hot

# Debugging Concurrency is Hard

- Few tools beyond per-proc gdb
  - Debugging multi-process systems is harder than single process, even without...
- Threads come with unique problems
  - Deadlock, data races, non-determinism
- High performance typically implies lots of locks
  - For max parallelism, vs. one "big" lock
  - Shows up in modern kernel evolution as SMP grows
  - As #cores grow, parallelism will have to extend further and further into apps/libs to keep getting faster

# Eraser: Lint for multi-threading

- Multiple threads in single address space
- Shared memory, one CPU
- Assumes:
  - pthreads lock() is sync, not monitors
  - libc memory allocation
- Doesn't work out causality
  - Costly bookkeeping; requires observing right interleaving
- Instead looks for idiom/style
  - Must hold lock to access shared variable
  - Data race: simultaneous access w/1+ writer
  - Limitation: must be consistent locking, not "either of two" locks
    - e.g., DB pages or multi-page locks

# Binary Rewriting

- "Metaprogramming" tool for executables
  - Read & partially understand binary
    - Could also be done in compiler...
  - Write new extended code after adding function
  - (Harder on x86, but it's been done - variable length binary instruction set vs. more RISC-like systems)
- DEC ATOM tool for Alpha
  - Insert counters -- "super gprof"
  - Idea: Add memory restriction for safer code (dynamic bounds checking)
  - Add lock analysis to "lint" the sync code.

# See Savage Slides

- http://www.cs.ucsd.edu/~savage/papers/Sosp97Slides.pdf
- Next bunch of slides taken in very large part, mostly verbatim, from the SOSP talk.
  - Some annotations. Blame dga, not SOSP talk, for bugs

## How *happens-before* misses races

Thread 1 / Thread 2

```
Thread 1:
y := y + 1;
lock(mu);
v := v + 1;
unlock(mu);

Thread 2:
lock(mu);
v := v + 1;
unlock(mu);
y := y + 1;
```

Not detected as a race by *happens-before*

# Lockset algorithm

- Dynamic analysis
- Require programmer to adhere to convention
  - *Locking Discipline:*
    - Consistently hold lock when using resource
  - Automatically infers *which* lock(s) protect resource
- Finds more bugs than "happens-before"
- But can generate many false positives!

## Checking simple discipline

C(v): locks that might protect variable v
Initialize C(v) := set of all locks

On each access to v by thread t,
  C(v) := C(v) ∩ locks_held(t)

If C(v) is empty, then issue a warning

## Refining the candidate set

| Program | New value of C(v) |
|---|---|
| | C(v) = {mu1, mu2} |
| `lock(mu1);` | |
| `v := v + 1;` | C(v) = {mu1} |
| `unlock(mu1);` | |
| `...` | |
| `lock(mu2);` | |
| `v := v + 1;` | C(v) = {} |
| `unlock(mu2);` | |

# False Positives

- FPs are *the* defining problem with this type of approach
  - We'll see later some other examples...
  - Really hurt usability. 1000 FPs + 1 bug isn't useful.
- Much of the rest of paper is about avoiding FPs
  - Ideally without reducing true positives (does it?)

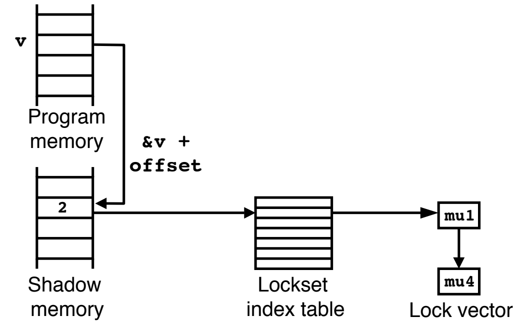
## Limitations of simple algorithm

- Initialization
  - Don't need locks until data is shared
- Read-shared data
  - Don't need locks if all accesses are reads
- Reader/writer locks
  - Read locks can't protect writes

## Modified algorithm

- Assume first thread is initializer
  - Only update C(v) after two threads touch v
- Only report races after data is known to be write-shared
- Track read and write locks separately
  - Remove read locks from C(v) on a write

## Mapping variables to sets of locks




## Performance

- Fast enough to be useful
  - 10-30x user-time slowdown
- Lots of opportunities for optimization
  - Half of overhead due to ATOM

## Experiences

- Tested real programs
  - AltaVista web server and index library
  - Vesta cache server
  - Petal distributed disk server
  - Undergrad coursework from intro OS class
- Most programs found to contain races
- False alarms easy to manage

## Program characterization

| *Program* | *Lines of code* | *Threads* | *Locks* | *Lock sets* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AltaVista** | | | | |
| Ni2 | 20,000 | 10 | 900 | 3600 |
| mhttpd | 5,000 | 10 | 100 | 250 |
| **Vesta** | 30,000 | 10 | 26 | 70 |
| **Petal** | 25,000 | 64 | | |

## Case study: AltaVista

- Double blind experiment
  - Two old races reintroduced
  - Previously undetected for several months
  - Found and fixed in 30 minutes
- Several additional (minor) races found
- Several benign races
  - Tricky optimizations

- Re-introducing bugs is a useful and now common technique

## Benign race example

```
if (p->fp == 0) {
   lock(p->lock);
   if (p->fp == 0) {
      p->fp = open_file();
   }
   unlock(p->lock);
}
```

- Advanced programmers make automatic inference hard...
  - Subtle optimization, hard to reason about its correctness

## Serious race (subtle)

```
if (p->fp == 0) {
   lock(p->lock);
   if (p->fp == 0) {
      p->fp = open_file();
   }
   unlock(p->lock);
}
pos = p->fp->pos;
```

## Case study: Undergraduate OS

- Four simple synchronization problems
  - e.g. producer consumer
- ~180 homeworks tested
- Found data races in more than 10%

## Overall races detected

| *Program* | *Serious races* | *Minor races* | *Benign races* |
|---|---|---|---|
| AltaVista | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Vesta | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Petal | | ✓ | |
| Undergrad assignments | ✓ | | |

## Kinds of false alarms

- Private memory allocators
  - e.g. free list
  - Need to reinitialize C(v)
- Private lock implementations
  - e.g. reader/writer locks
  - Need to know when locks are held
- Benign races

## Removing false alarms

- Simple program annotations
- Number of annotations needed to remove all false alarms:
  - AltaVista (19)
  - Vesta (10)
  - Petal (4)

# end SOSP talk slides

# Eval

- Modern systems eval
  - Real impl (distributable; recently rediscovered value for research code)
    - Injected faults by sticking old bugs back into code
      - This technique used in many subsequent evals
      - cvs/svn/git/etc. history
  - Applied to large, real applications and multiple mostly independent tests (students)
- Would have been nice to see more quantitative comparison between systems, but that's another paper... :)

# Eval 2

- Not perfect tool:
  - 10x slowdown
  - Processor specific for dead processor
  - No guarantee to catch all races
    - In particular: Engler papers suggest many bugs lurk in infrequently hit code -- error handling, etc.
    - Dynamic detection has hard time catching those
      - Just like testing does.
- But useful for an otherwise hard problem

# Design Space

- Static vs. Dynamic analysis
  - Dynamic: Depends on execution order
  - Static: Intractable (but can work well, today)
- Sound vs. Unsound
  - Note tension between pragmatists and correct-ists
- Existing languages (C...) vs. "Better" languages
  - Actual code? Annotations? Model?
  - Type systems; correct by construction?
- Eval questions:
  - False positives? False negatives? Coverage?
  - Running time?
  - Run in tests vs. in production system?

# Follow-on

- Want more?
  - “Bugs as Deviant Behavior: A General Approach to Inferring Errors in Systems Code”
    - SOSP 2001. Dawson Engler, David Yu Chen, Seth Hallem, Andy Chou, and Benjamin Chelf
  - “The Daikon system for dynamic detection of likely invariants”
    - Science of Computer Programming 2007. Michael D. Ernst, Jeff H. Perkins, Philip J. Guo, Stephen McCamant, Carlos Pacheco, Matthew S. Tschantz, Chen Xiao.
  - Both examine more general invariants
    - Daikon examines more invariants;
    - Engler et al. is static
    - Both use machine-learning/statistical techniques to infer invariants